THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. IV. April 8, 1938 Nisan 7, 5698 No. 4.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

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by Eugene Kohn

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by Morris Silverman

CORRESPONDENCE: Opposing Anti-Communist Crusade
The Synagogue and the Unaffiliated

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CORRESPONDENCE

THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE UNAFFILIATED

Sirs:

"Religion is a neglected art," says Rabbi Burnstein ("The Synagogue In An Age of Confusion," THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, issue of March 11th) "because human nature regards it as something which can be postponed for the present." And Rabbi Burnstein proceeds to answer human nature by restating the threefold synthesis of the age old conception of the function of the Synagogue.

The statistics of Jewish irreligion are startling. A group of mathematically minded Jews recently computed that less than 30 per cent of the Jewish adult population have any association with Jewish religious institutions. Any intercourse with non-synagogue going Jews in New York Cty will readily reveal that large and sufficient numbers believe the Synagogue to be no longer significant in serving the human wants or needs of modern life, or they believe the Synagogue to be competing with other ideal and social institutions already amply serving these needs.

There are many problems which confront the restoration of the Synagogue as a significant institution in modern Jewish life. There is the physical problem of attendance for a population of Jewry which perforce must spend its Sabbath mornings in labor at providing food and shelter. There is the problem of impelling attendance upon those Jews fortunately endowed with Sabbath morning leisure. There is the further problem implicit in the statement that lack of Synagogue attendance in America is associated with the larger aspects of irreligion common to both Jew and Gentile. One of the great tasks facing Judaism today is establishing in the minds of moderns the need for a religious attitude toward the universe. Judaism must dispel the common notion that believing and practicing Jews have adolescent or ideological lags that are irrelevant and unreal for 20th century living. In the face of frustrations, personal and social, Judaism must be presented to the irreligious as a concept and way of life operative for present day personal and social happiness.

Secondly, Judaism must establish in the minds of Jewry the notion of uniqueness for the Synagogue as a social institution. Other organizations of human welfare, Jewish philanthropies and Jewish social service, Jewish hospitals and Jewish schools, no matter how effective and worthy, must be depicted as all deriving their sustenance from a key institution. The Synagogue must be depicted as the central institution which sustains and illumines the larger canvas of Jewish life. The Synagogue must be portrayed as the fountain head fusing and directing all the forces which flow through modern Jewish life. It must be in itself revealed as the unity or fusion of these forces—ideal and pragmatic—and without it Jewish life can only be seen as a haphazard, meaningless and wayward stream.

It is not enough to state that the Synagogue must again become *bet-hatefilah, bet-hamidrash* and *bet-hakeneset*. Our problem, the problem of layman and rabbi together, is the "How." *How* shall we revise or reinterpret the Sabbath service so that modern Jews upon entering the Synagogue will thrill with a sense of kinship with all Israel and communion with the God force operative in an infinite universe? How shall the messages that go forth from our pulpits be attuned to the intellectual problems that disturb present day Jewry? How shall the Synagogue function as a significant institution in the fostering of Jewish education? How can the Synagogue best serve individual Jews and Jews as a society in creative self-development?

Two million adult Jews, who are today beyond the influence of Jewish religious institutions, cannot be won back by restating the age-old conception of the Synagogue. The Synagogue must face the causes of Jewish irreligion realistically. Nothing less than a complete and comprehensive grasp of the intellectual, physical and economic forces which tend to undermine the efficacy of the Synagogue can restore it to a vital functioning as a *bet-hatefilah*, a *bet-hamidrash* and a *bet-hakeneset* for modern Israel.

LEOPOLD J. SNEIDER

New York, N. Y.

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EDITORIALS

Hope for Israel in the Hour of Darkness

IF we were to look into the hearts of even the most sanguine Jews today, we should probably find terror and distraction. At no time in all the long history of our people have the prospects for a peaceful and secure future seemed more dim. In the increasingly large area of the world, dominated by Nazism and fascism, a relentless drive is on to exterminate the Jews; and in those lands where political democracy still holds the fort, Jews are conscious of an accelerated growth of anti-Semitism.

Even the recent celebration of Purim did not serve to lift the dark gloom. To be sure, it reminded us of the many attempts upon the life of our people, and of our periodic salvation. But the days are over when an Esther or any individual pleader can turn impending doom into safety. In addition, the deep faith in *deus ex machina,* a supernatural intervention, does not, for the most part, any longer function. A dread fear, therefore, clutches at the heart of the Jew.

Whence shall come a message of hope? If ever Jews needed such a message, it is now. We venture to speak the word of hope, based not upon a leap into the dark but upon a sociological truth which, in our anxiety, we may ignore. Upon that truth we base our conviction that today the Jews have a much better chance to survive than they did in the days of Haman when Esther appeared before the king.

In those days, the survival of the Jewish people was an issue to be decided by one man. (We take the story as it has come down to us.) The Jews had no friends except themselves. Their destruction or survival had no more significance than that of any obscure community of men and women. If Haman had succeeded in carrying out his plan, the then contemporary world would have taken little note.

Today, our people's survival has become an issue of universal significance. Those who hate us and seek our destruction have identified us with ideals and principles which they detest. Whether they have ascribed the origin of these ideals and principles to us rightly or wrongly, we Jews have become the symbols of certain political and social standards. The Nazis speak of *Jewish* democracy, *Jewish* intellectualism, *Jewish* freedom, *Jewish* equality. They have made a philosophy of their demoniacal designs. Following the lead of Nietzche, they detest the slave morality of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and they mean to symbolize their victory over it by destroying the Jews and persuading others to do likewise.

Thus have we had foisted upon us a role in world history. Gladly, eagerly should we accept the role. In this role, our suffering becomes once more meaningful. It ceases to be merely the suffering of an anonymous people at the hands of an irrational and brutally barbarous nation. It becomes the gigantic and significant clash of conflicting philosophies. In that case, we discover that we are not alone, that we have more friends in the world than we ever had, for our fate is now bound up with the fate of all Christendom, with the fate of the liberal world, with the fate of all who, though now silenced by the concentration camp, will not forever keep their peace.

Our hope lies in our hope for the world —and not merely our hope for the magnanimity of a single oriental monarch. We have become a symbol of human rights. Let only those who despair of life itself despair of our future.

THE RECENT ACTION of the President of the United States in asking 29 nations to co-operate in taking care of the political refugees from Germany and Austria, will be hailed with hearty approbation by every Jew. We wish, however, to stress the fact that, except for providing the executive machinery and conducting the necessary political negotiations, the agency to be set up by the co-operating governments assumes none of the responsibility for making possible the migration of political refugees and their readjustment in their new homes. This responsibility will continue to rest on private philanthropic agencies. This means that, for the Jewish refugees, the major part of the burden will fall upon the HIAS. Its campaign for $250,000 in addition to its annual budget must be made a success. The President does not ask for applause but for co-operation; the refugees need not sympathy but aid.

THE FUNDS RAISED by the HIAS Campaign are to be applied toward aiding in the emigration of Jews from Europe "to such countries overseas *where such assistance is not contrary to the laws of the countries of admission.*" This means that, at best, the HIAS will be able to handle only a small trickle of the pent flood of emigration that would ensue if all Jews who needed to migrate were allowed access to other countries. We cannot, however, blame the nations in general for restricting immigration in times of economic stress or for considering the economic interests of their own nationals as an obligation prior to the humane extension of asylum to alien refugees.

But Palestine presents a special case. Because of the historical connection of the Jewish people with the land, it is conceded that in Palestine they are entitled to a national home, that Jews come "as of right and not on sufferance." Surely the doors of Palestine should be kept wide open at a time like this. Instead, they are not even held ajar. The restricted immigration schedules allowed by the British government do not even pretend to be guided by the principle of the absorptive capacity of the land, not even by the absorptive capacity of that small fraction of the land which has been indicated for the projected Jewish state.

The answer of the Jewish people to this situation must be such an intensified Zionist activity, such a passionate beating upon the doors of Palestine, that these will have to yield. We are a stiff-necked people; we will not be turned aside.

IN VIEW OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIONS raised against the Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill, the President has come forward with a proposal for a substitute method of achieving the same objective. He proposes authorization of a Federal inquiry into all cases of mob violence by a commission appointed by either the President or Congress. It is assumed that, with the facts known, public opinion would be able to control the situation.

But is the problem of lynching merely a problem of mob violence? Most instances of mob violence can be met by government agencies as they have been met without any new legislation being required. The problem of lynching is the problem raised by reluctance or incompetence of local governments to protect citizens accused of crime, in their constitutional right to a fair trial. Since this is a right guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, there can be no dodging by the federal government of the responsibility for enforcing the constitutional guarantee. It is significant that the states that have flouted and nullified the Fifteenth Amendment are the ones that have defeated the Anti-Lynching Bill.

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Zionism and Jewish Community Planning

By Eugene Kohn

THE ideal of *yishub eretz yisrael,* the resettling of Palestine by Jews, is as old as the Dispersion. Throughout the Middle Ages, there were many efforts at such resettlement, some of them associated with messianic movements. But Zionism, in the modern sense of the term, means much more than the migration of Jews into Palestine or even the establishment of an autonomous Jewish community there. When we speak of developing Palestine as the national home of the Jewish people, we are committing ourselves to a national interpretation of Jewish life. Unless the Jewish people, no matter how widely they may be scattered, constitute in some sense a nation, there is no meaning to the term "national home." It is precisely this nationalistic conception of Judaism that distinguishes the Zionist from the non-Zionist who is sympathetic to the claims of the Palestinian *yishub.*

If the Jews are a nation, they need a national home in Palestine; if not, Palestine is merely one land to which Jewish migration may be directed. We are all more or less familiar with the difference in Palestinian policy that arises from a conception of Palestine as the national home in contradistinction to a conception of Palestine as a mere refuge for Jewish individuals. But there is another implication of the Jewish national idea which has not received equal clarification in Zionist councils.

For, if the Jews, no matter where they reside, constitute a nation, their nationalism must make a difference in their life wherever they may live it. Just what do we mean by calling the Jews a nation? Obviously we do not use the term in precisely the same sense as when we speak of Germany, France or the United States as nations. Jews do not possess and do not lay claim to unqualified political sovereignty over any portion of the earth, not excepting Palestine. When we Zionists speak of the Jews as constituting a nation we have in mind that the basis of Jewish affiliation is not the voluntary association of individuals for some specific purpose such, for example, as the spread of a religious propaganda, but an identification with a particular ethnic group or community into which the Jew is born, a group with common historic memories, common present interests, and a common will to continue living its group life under the best conditions it can obtain for itself.

Such a conception of the nature of Judaism, while it is in harmony with traditional Jewish attitudes, is in direct opposition to a conception of Judaism that has prevailed since the so-called Emancipation, and that has dominated Jewish thought and Jewish life, particularly in western lands, for the last century and a half. Ever since the liberal movements of the eighteenth century held out to the

Jewish people the prospect of equal civil and political rights and equal cultural opportunities with the rest of the people among whom they lived, Jews have sought a formula by which they could be incorporated into the nations of the western world and still justify their continuing to live as Jews. They found this formula in the theory that the common bond of unity among Jews was their consent to the doctrines and conformity with the practices of Jewish religion. Experience has since shown the inadequacy of this formula. Reasonable as it appeared at the time, the results of its adoption have proved disillusioning in two ways.

In the first place, different interpretations soon developed as to what constituted the religious doctrines to which Jews must subscribe and the religious practices to which they must conform. The impact of modern scientific thought undermined the traditional beliefs of many Jews, and the stress of economic conditions in a competitive economy rendered difficult and, for many, impossible the practice of religious observances. Consequently, religion, which was expected to serve as the sole bond of union among Jews, proved a source of disunion and division. The inner unity, which had hitherto prevailed in Jewry even in the Dispersion because of the segregation of the Jews from the rest of the population and because of the autonomy of Jewish law and Jewish communal life, was dissolved and a rapid process of disintegration ensued.

In the second place, the hope that the abandonment of Jewish national separatism would lead to the acceptance of the Jews into full fellowship with the peoples among whom they lived, proved illusory. The antipathy against the Jews, which, in the Middle Ages, when society as a whole was organized along religious lines, had assumed a religious color, was not dispelled but merely secularized. It was converted from opposition to the Jew as an enemy of the Church to opposition to the Jew as an enemy of the dominant national majority. Elaborate racial theories were devised as rationalizations of this hostility. Jew-hatred became anti-Semitism. Even those elements of the non-Jewish population that have risen superior to mass-hatred, still regard the Jews as a tolerated minority group living in their midst, rather than as flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone.

The growing disillusionment of Jewry with the results of the Emancipation led to a resurgence of the Jewish will to continue living as a distinct social organism, seeking to defend its right to exist not by words but by deeds. Zionism was born to assert the determination of the Jewish people to have done with apologies and to insure its continued existence by striving for the fullest measure of self-determination possible. Zionists understand that the salvation of the Jew cannot come from outside of Jewry but must come from within Jewry; that the only possible emancipation for the Jews is self-emancipation.

One indispensable condition to Jewish self-emancipation is the establishment of an autonomous center of Jewish life. There must be founded somewhere a Jewish community that can control all the essential elements that go to the making of a Jewish civilization: economic life, social and legal institutions, education, language and culture. But only Palestine, by reason of its historic connection with the Jewish people, can provide the locale for this activity. Although Zionist objectives in Palestine have by no means been fully attained, what has been accomplished there has laid a strong foundation that has given courage and confidence to Jewry throughout the world and demonstrated the vigor of the Jewish will to live.

But the development of the Jewish national home is not the only indispensable condition to that Jewish self-emancipation at which Zionism aims. An objective of scarcely less importance is the organization of Jewry throughout the world in such a way as to insure the maximum collaboration of Jews in seeking to better

their conditions and to make Jewish life a source of legitimate pride and satisfaction. The achievement of this second objective is today being thwarted by the disorganization resulting from the efforts of an earlier generation to liquidate all common interests of Jews except those that fell under the classification of religious, as the term is understood by most religious denominations. To be sure, many Jewish interests not directly of a denominational character were maintained after a fashion, but almost always under a disguise that militated against their successful prosecution. Thus some concern remained with the economic welfare of Jews, but it was assumed that this concern was based not on the common nationhood of Jews, but on purely humane considerations, that it was based on charity. As a result, the maintenance of Jewish charitable institutions was for a long time the major communal activity of American Jews. But the consequence of thus disguising a natural interest on the part of Jews in the economic welfare of the Jewish community under the mantle of charity was to divide the Jewish community along class lines, as between the donors and the recipients of charity. This had particularly vicious effects in America, where the circumstances of history tended for a long time to put the descendents of German Jews in the position of donors and the descendents of east-European Jews in the position of recipients. There followed from this circumstance a class-division along lines of European origin which not even the subsequent rise to wealth and influence of many Russian and Polish Jews has sufficed to obliterate.

Again, in the field of cultural activity, some interest in the Hebrew language was naturally retained. But, since the theory was that all Jewish education was religious education, it was felt that the ritualistic use of Hebrew was all that mattered. The use of Hebrew as a vehicle of cultural expression and communication was disregarded. Almost no attempt was made to encourage Jewish self-expression in literature and the arts. Jewish music was limited to the music of the synagogue, and even synagogal music drew heavily on the hymns of the church and the arias of popular western operas for musical motifs.

In a word, the disintegration in the corporate life of the Jewish people reduced it to cultural sterility. This was most conspicuous in the field of religion itself. Notwithstanding the fact that, theoretically, religion constituted for most Jews the sole reason for Jewish existence, the period since the Emancipation has produced no great hymns, devotional literature, religious art, religious holidays or other manifestations of religious creativity. The Jewish soul was lacking a Jewish body with adequate organs through which it could express itself. The recreation of that body is the gigantic task that now confronts us.

To appreciate the peculiar difficulty of the task, we must understand that it involves a reversal of the usual processes of social evolution. Ordinarily, a community, acting as a social organism, creates the institutions which are the organs by which it lives. We today must reverse this process. The various existing Jewish institutions must unite to create the community; the organs must combine to create the organism, like the dried bones of Ezekiel's vision that came together, bone to bone, developed sinews, and stood on their feet, a mighty host. But this anomolous character of our task should not daunt us as Zionists, for the whole Zionist undertaking is of a similar nature. History knows many instances of mother-countries sending out widely dispersed colonies, but Zionism offers the unique phenomenon of scattered colonies as it were, uniting, to recreate a mother country.

II

While not yielding to a defeatist mood in respect to the task of creating a social structure that shall express the organic unity of Jewish life, it is important for us

to understand that its accomplishment involves nothing less than a psychological and sociological revolution in Jewish life. Zionists must rid Jews of the notion that Judaism is merely a private affair between the individual Jew and his God. They must teach the Jewish people to recognize in Judaism the collective expression of the character of the Jewish people through the civilization which it has created, and which it must consciously endeavor to preserve and develop. Today the interest of most Jews in Judaism is limited to some special aspect of Jewish life which is stressed by the particular Jewish institution with which, for one reason or another, they happen to be affiliated, be it a synagogue, a Zionist organization, a favorite philanthropy, a fraternal lodge, or a Jewish labor group. They tend to identify the whole meaning of Judaism with the particular Jewish interest that is represented by the institution through which their Jewish loyalty expresses itself, and are almost unaware that Judaism has other meanings to Jews who are affiliated with other institutions.

The member of a Reformist Jewish congregation, may, from the point of view of what Judaism means to him, find less occasion and less need for collaborating religiously with members of an Orthodox Jewish congregation than with members of a Unitarian church. The Orthodox Jew may look upon the ritual of a Reformist temple as a sort of *abodah zarah,* a veiled apostasy. Yet both are sincere in their desire to see Judaism flourish. Similarly, a member of a radical Jewish labor group may dismiss the manifestation of Jewish interest both of the Reformist and the Orthodox Jew as a reactionary expression of a bourgeois civilization, which is at best irrelevant to the vital needs of the Jewish masses, and may identify Judaism entirely with Yiddishism, socialism or labor Zionism. And these are but a few of the various Jewish attitudes which, to their adherents, spell the whole meaning of Judaism.

Nevertheless, each of these special manifestations of Jewish life is affected by the status of the Jewish people as a whole in the modern world, and each implies an interest in the destiny of the Jewish people as a whole, and tries to influence the totality of Jewish life in accordance with its own conception of what Judaism means. It is this dim awareness of being bound up in a common destiny which Zionists, in accordance with their nationalistic conception of Judaism, must bring to light. They must make Jews conscious of the need of integrating all elements of the Jewish people and enabling them to react creatively to one another. The individual Jew must be made aware of the roots of his Jewish personality in Jewish history and of the involvement of his deepest interests with the destiny of the Jewish people. The resurgence of anti-Semitism has made Jews increasingly mindful in our day that their lives are conditioned by the fact of their Jewish birth, and this has led many to seek anew to associate themselves with their fellow Jews.

But this is not enough. It is not enough that Jews seek the fellowship of other Jews because they see in them companions in misery. The glory of the Zionist movement is that it rallies the Jewish people to seek a way out of their misery, that it directs their energies to the task of self-emancipation from all that frustrates and fetters Jewish personality. Zionism must utilize the idea of Jewish nationalism to evoke the creative effort of the Jewish people in the building up of Jewish civilization. It must not only appeal to Jews to contribute to the survival of the Jewish people, but it must convince them that the sacrifices demanded by this effort are worthwhile. This it can do only by enabling Jewish community life to enrich the personal life of every member of the Jewish community through a civilization in which each has his share.

It is clear that such a change in the psychological reaction of Jews to Jewish experience in the modern world demands for its achievement a corresponding

change in the organizational structure of Jewish society. At the present time a Jew who wants to express his loyalty to the totality of Jewish interests hardly knows where to turn. For, as has already been intimated, there is no institution in Jewish life that is able or willing to assume responsibility for Judaism as a whole.

Some religionists may take issue with this statement and contend that the synagogue is such an institution. They can make out a plausible case for their contention by citing the dominant role that the synagogue has played in Jewish life in the past, and arguing that it stood for everything that gave value and significance to that life. But a realistic examination of all the relevant facts will show that the synagogue in its present set-up cannot possibly give effective expression to the organic conception of Jewish life.

Let us grant that in the past the synagogue had such deep roots in Jewish history, and was so consciously the vehicle of Jewish destiny, that it was in effect the organization for expressing the will of the Jewish people in its effort to achieve a good life for the community and the individual. The synagogue undeniably was the formative influence that both expressed and determined the character of Jewish life. The *keneset yisrael* or the Synagogue was not distinct from the *am yisrael,* the Jewish people; it *was* that people as organized for the realization of its highest aims, the quest of the best possible way of life for the Jew.

But in the present, the institutions to which we give the name synagogue are not so many branches of a national religious institution, the *keneset yisrael* or Congregation of Israel; they are private corporations. Their membership is limited; they are under no general communal supervision, and they are not held responsible for any Jewish activity except such as their membership wishes to pursue. There is among them no uniformity of ritual and no necessary recognition of Jewish law. They are usually under the guidance of a rabbi who is referred to as a spiritual leader; but the dependence of the rabbi on the congregation for his livelihood commonly inhibits his exercise of the authority to which his superior knowledge of the Jewish cultural tradition should entitle him. Congregational rivalries, lack of informed lay leadership, vulgar competition for popular recognition and support obscure the traditional function of the synagogue as supplying the religious sanction for Jewish national and communal life. Hence the tendency of the modern synagogue to deteriorate to the level of a social club whose members occasionally, but very infrequently, share in public worship.

These statements are not to be construed as a diatribe against the synagogue or its lay or rabbinic leaders. Many of these are sincerely concerned to have the synagogue function as a sanctifying influence in Jewish life. The traditional ritual of the synagogue and the doctrine expounded from the pulpit are, even to this day, an inspiration to many to engage in activities of distinct value to Jewish national aims. The very fact that the Jewish ritual is meaningless without reference to the Jewish national heritage and the Jewish national destiny makes the synagogue, even with all its present limitations, at least potentially, a vital organ of Jewish communal life. But in so far as the synagogue is interested in raising Jewish life to a higher spiritual level, it can do so effectively only as an integral unit of a larger whole, the Jewish community. For it can neither dispense with nor can it exercise absolute control over such movements as Zionism, Jewish education, Jewish social service, the promotion of Jewish literature and art, and the defense of Jewish rights. Its best chance of influencing these movements would be afforded by its inclusion in a form of community organization which embraces every Jewish institution and association that has something to contribute to the sum total of Jewish life.

If there is any organized force that has

enabled Jews to transcend sectional and partisan viewpoints and envisage the problem of Jewish life in its organic integrity, it is the Zionist movement itself. But this does not mean that the Zionist organization is capable of assuming full responsibility for fostering all the complex manifestations of the Jewish spirit in the diaspora as well as in Palestine, even though all of them are relevant to the problem of Jewish self-emancipation. It can obviously not undertake the task of Jewish education, Jewish social service, the defense of Jewish rights, the promotion of the physical health and economic welfare of the Jews of the Diaspora, or the strengthening of that religious faith which inspires the Jewish people with the courage to carry on. Even for the upbuilding of Palestine, which is and must remain the central purpose of the Zionist movement, the World Zionist Organization did not feel that it commanded sufficient resources of men and means to achieve the task alone. It called for the cooperation of non-Zionist elements thru the creation of the Jewish Agency. No attempt to deal realistically with the problem of Jewish life can overlook the heterogeneous character of the Jewish population and the diversity of Jewish interests. It is unreasonable to expect that Judaism can mean the same, in any concrete sense, to a Jewish laborer and a Jewish capitalist, or to a Jew raised in a small western community and a Jew raised in the New York ghetto, to a Jew trained in a yeshivah and to one whose Jewish education was confined to a Sunday school or the visits of a *melammed* for a few months before *bar mitzvah*. Nevertheless it is true that all Jews are in the same boat and that, unless they pull together at the oars, they will drown together, overwhelmed by the tremendous forces that threaten to engulf them. Any attempt at organizing the Jewish will to live must seek to achieve unity without imposing uniformity.

III

To give effective expression to the organic unity of Jewish life, Jewish society must be reorganized as a net-work of local *kehillot* and federations of national and international Jewish organizations. Membership in the *kehillot* must be open to all who wish to identify themselves as Jews and share in the responsibilities of Jewish life, regardless of their economic status or ideological tenets. The machinery of political democracy must be utilized to effect unity in action for common ends, while permitting the fullest measure of freedom of thought and discussion. Care must be exercised not merely to give opportunity for ascertaining and giving effect to the will of the majority in matters of public Jewish interest, but also for protecting minorities in their right to dissent and to pursue special interests which they may not share with others.

In the present situation such a scheme must seem utopian in character. But so did the Zionist idea when first it was promulgated. The suggestion here advanced is not intended as a blue-print for a new social structure for *kelal yisrael*. If we recognize this fact, the utopian character of our proposal does not discredit it. For the function of a utopia is to indicate the direction which we should like to give to social processes that are at work and are, at least partially, within our control. As we endeavor to embody in reality our vision of the conceivable and desirable future, our very effort at doing so leads to experiences that reveal to us both the possibilities and the limitations inherent in our task, and our objectives become more practical. The eventual result is bound to be different from our original conception of it, but it is nevertheless a consequence and, in great part at least, a fulfilment of our original intention. When, for example, we consider the oft-times fantastic ideas of the early protagonists of Zionism, their naive notion of acquiring Palestine by purchase from the Turkish Sultan, and their failure

even to envisage a problem of Arab-Jewish relations, we can see why hard-headed Jewish business men originally condemned the movement as unpractical. But the fantastic dream of Herzl and his associates has resulted in our day in the only practical solution of the personal problem of hundreds of thousands of Jews who have found a refuge in Palestine from intolerable conditions elsewhere, not to mention such other achievements as the revival of the Hebrew language and literature, the strengthening of Jewish self-respect and the renascence of Jewish creative activity in terms of social idealism, aesthetic self-expression and intellectual productivity. It would be folly for us to reject the hope of achieving a more integrated social structure for Jewish life merely because we cannot chart in detail the method of attaining it, or even envisage our goal with clarity and precision. For our hope is born of a need that our experience of the frustrations resulting from social disintegration has impressed upon us.

In the determination of ends, we must be idealists; in the choice of means, we may and must be opportunists, the only limitation to our opportunism being the insistence that the means be appropriate to the end. We must ask ourselves what chances there are at the present time for advancing, even though it be but a short step, in the direction of our ideal. If we adopt such a policy, we shall find that present-day conditions do not justify a pessimistic attitude to the whole problem. For the circumstances of life are forcing the Jewish people into a dawning recognition of the need for a more integrated form of Jewish communal life.

In theory, most American Jews probably still think of the Jews as constituting a religious denomination, and of the synagogue as the basic unit of its organization. Nevertheless, the pursuit of Jewish interests that transcend the social, economic and ideological divisions, responsible for the multiplicity of types of synagogues, led early in the history of American Jewry to organized Jewish activities that took no cognizance of the synagogue as such. First, there were the charitable organizations. From the outset these ignored congregational lines and drew their support from members of all congregations, and from the unaffiliated. In the beginning they all worked independently, but fiscal considerations, the need for avoiding conflicts and duplication of effort in fund-raising and administration, led to the creation of federations. As other Jewish institutions, notably those of an educational and cultural character, arose in response to Jewish needs and tended to compete with the fund-raising efforts of the federations, the issue was met by including many of them in the federation set-up.

In the meantime, nation-wide Jewish organizations for various purposes brought many local organizations into cooperative relationship. The organization of such congregational unions as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the United Synagogue of America and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations helped to reduce the organizational anarchy prevailing in Jewish religious life. It is significant that these religious organizations, together with their respective rabbinical associations, have registered a need of transcending their ideological differences in some degree by uniting in the Synagogue Council of America. Then there are the organizations for the defense of Jewish rights such as the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the B'nai B'rith. We may deplore the fact that these organiations still frequently work at cross purposes, but their existence nevertheless testifies to a felt need for Jewish communal organization along other than religious denominational lines. Finally, the Zionist Organization itself, with its many ramifications has demonstrated not only the need, but the possibility, of Jews with the most diverse religious and social outlooks collaborating in the interest of Jewish life as a whole.

With the responsibilities assumed by American Jewry during the World War, Jewish communal life in America lost much of its previous parochialism. The need for Jewish representation before the conferences for the negotiation of the post-war treaties resulted in the convening of the most comprehensive representation of American Jewish organizations and interests that has ever assembled in this country. Zionists and non-Zionists, religionists and secularists, labor organizations and organizations predominantly bourgeois in their constituency and outlook—all took part in the American Jewish Congress that was then called. Under the stimulus of the critical situation confronting the Jewish people as a whole, the sense of a community of interest in which all Jews shared was brought vividly to the foreground and found organized expression in the Congress.

To be sure, after the crisis was over, the movement for the integration of Jewish life suffered a recession, and the separatistic tendencies that prevailed before the crisis again asserted themselves. When the permanent American Jewish Congress was organized, it was by no means as representative of all Jewry as had been the original temporary organization. But it is still a powerful symbol of the conscious demand for a more integrated American Jewry and an influence in the desired direction.

More recent events have again tended to strengthen the tendency to Jewish community organization. The need for resisting the rising tide of anti-Semitism has impressed most Jews with the impossibility of assimilation and with the need for Jewish fellowship. But other factors limited to the American scene also play an important part in the growing demand for Jewish community organization. The Jewish organization with the broadest base of local Jewish support is, in most communities, the federation of Jewish charities. But with the growing interest of government in problems of social welfare, many of the eleemosynary functions of the federations and their constituent institutions have been taken over by government agencies. Consequently, the popularity of their appeal has tended to wane. Nevertheless there is no disposition to liquidate these institutions but rather to give them new functions appropriate to the changed situation. For institutions that have acquired both moral and material assets resist liquidation, and tend rather to adapt themselves to new conditions by adopting new aims and purposes. Far-sighted Jewish social workers are therefore beginning to envisage a new type of Jewish federation, one that shall be inclusive of all local Jewish organizations and not merely of philanthropic institutions. They want these federations, or community councils as they are sometimes called, to be interested not merely in the fiscal administration of their affiliated organizations but also in their efficient functioning for the public welfare. And they want the purpose of the federations to be not merely humanitarian aid to Jewish individuals, but the utilization of the Jewish cultural heritage, through educational, recreational and character-building activities, for effecting a wholesome integration of the Jew into American life, one that will not involve the surrender of Jewish group loyalties, but shall utilize Jewish group life for the development of the personal powers of the individual on the one hand and for the enrichment of American civilization on the other.

Many American Jewish communities are today experimenting with community councils that approximate in greater or lesser degree this new type of federation. This is not the place for an evaluation of such experiments in community planning as are being made in Cleveland, Harrisburg, Detroit and other American cities at the present time. They are mentioned merely as indications that, although an integrated structure for Jewish communal life does not exist, its projection is not wholly utopian. The first

steps in this direction are definitely on the agenda of American Jewry.

IV

What part, if any, shall the Zionist Organization play in this movement? It cannot assume direct responsibility for the organization of diaspora Jewry. It has a big enough job organizing the Palestinian project of the Jewish people. But it can, through its organs of public opinion and in its cultural and educational activities, stress the underlying philosophy of Jewish communal organization. Like Zionist work in Palestine, the attempt to organize Jewry in the diaspora for the achievement of common ends is part of the Jewish effort at self-emancipation and self-determination. It evokes from within the Jewish people those creative and constructive forces that not only make Jewish survival possible, but make it worthwhile. Zionists cannot consistently encourage the establishment of a complete Jewish civilization in Palestine, and condone the liquidation of all Jewish secular interests in the diaspora. For Jews, who will be contented with a minimum of association with their own people in the diaspora, will not feel a strong sense of identification with the national home of their people in Palestine. The moral support which the Zionist movement should give to efforts at community planning has a precedent in the moral support that it has always given to the American Jewish Congress.

Zionists must not wash their hands of this responsibility on the ground that, even without their efforts, social forces at work in American Jewish life seem to be moving in the direction of community organization. For if Jewish community organization is to yield the desired result, it must be guided by an ideology that is in harmony with Zionist aspirations. Jewish communities must view their tasks in broad historical perspective, appreciative of Jewish cultural values and of their responsibilities for the future of the Jewish people as a whole. Otherwise, petty local interests may loom larger than vital Jewish movements of national and international scope. Their organization must conform to the democratic principle implicit in Jewish nationalism as a folk-movement. The Jewish kehillah must include in its membership every Jew who wishes to identify himself with the Jewish people and share in its communal life, regardless of his social or economic status and his religious or political convictions. It must not only be responsive to the public opinion of the majority of its members, but must show respect for minorities and their rights.

This means that every local Jewish organization, the program of which aims at encouraging some phase or phases of Jewish life, whether that program meets with the approval of the majority of the kehillah or not, should have an opportunity of expressing itself freely and should enjoy the maximum of autonomy in all matters in which its specific aims and purposes are involved. But in all matters in which their specific aims and purposes are not involved, organizations must be prepared to surrender as much of their institutional autonomy as may be necessary for the effective execution of joint undertakings expressive of the common purposes of the organization as a whole. Unless such principles as these, which are implicit in the ideal of democratic nationalism that informs the Zionist movement, are heeded in the organization of Jewish communities, much mischief may result. For they can then easily fall into the hands of groups whose policies are not grounded in an understanding of Jewish needs, and who may exploit their position in the Jewish community to promote personal or partisan ends.

In advocating these principles as guides to Jewish community planning, Zionists have the advantage of being able to point to the experience of the Zionist movement itself to demonstrate the possibility of collaboration among Jews of all sorts in promoting Jewish welfare. For the Zionist

Organization itself is composed of the most diverse elements. Its membership includes individuals and groups that differ in respect to political allegiance, religious convictions, economic interests, social outlook, cultural background and any number of other respects. Nevertheless, it has been able to unite this heterogeneous mass and organize its will to establish the Jewish homeland in Palestine. For it has been true to the principle of democratic nationhood, which in essence must be the foundation of all Jewish community planning. Out of deference to our non-Zionist friends, we may speak of the Jews as a community rather than a nation, for we do not wish to rule out of the Jewish ranks those who cannot see the nationalistic implications of Jewish community life; but this does not alter the essentials of the situation. We want Jews everywhere to feel that they belong together, that they are responsible for and to one another, and that they must collaborate wherever collaboration can be helpful in enabling Jems to make the most of their lives individually and collectively. Impelled by this want, we must create the organs necessary for its satisfaction. We must organize our communities.

A Prayer Book Which Meets Present Needs*

By MORRIS SILVERMAN**

FOLLOWING the publication of Rabbi Routtenberg's review of my Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book, a number of rabbis wrote to me taking issue with the reviewer's flippant attitude, his inconsistent arguments, and his unrealistic approach. Some of these letters were published; other correspondents were informed that since I was asked to write on the subject, my reply would close the issue.

In the interest of fairness, the readers of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST should know the reactions of others who have carefully read the book, and particularly the opinions of those who are actually using it at their services. Among the latter are two of the editors of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST. May I quote from one of these letters—a letter written by Rabbi Milton Steinberg:

"The reviewer was concerned with radical principles in liturgical arrangements, whereas you very frankly undertook and successfully completed a prayer book which represents an effective rather than a basic reconstruction. Rabbi Routtenberg's review was admittedly utopian, and anyone who sees your prayer book knows that within the realm of the prayer book yours is the best and most usable job that has ever been done. Contributions such as yours are definitely valuable in that they make worship as it is, more effective and meaningful."

However, even in a utopian plan, there must necessarily be consistency. Rabbi Routtenberg admits that the prayer book contains "a very fine collection of responsive readings scattered through the prayer book for every conceivable occasion . . . and special selections placed strategically at such points in the service where the worshiper's attention is most likely to wander." Nevertheless, he maintains that the prayer book "offers no new approach." On the one hand, he considers the Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book "a serious and earnest attempt to introduce a unifying force in the widely divergent service rituals that prevail in Conservative Congregations," and on the other hand, he says "we must be courageous enough

* In the January 14th issue of The RECONSTRUCTIONIST, we published a review of Rabbi Morris Silverman's new Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book, which contained some adverse criticism. Since then we have received considerable correspondence on the subject, of which we could not publish all. In view of the interest in the subject and in justice to those of our correspondents who disagreed with the reviewer, we have invited Rabbi Silverman to give his own answer to the strictures contained in the review.—Eds.

** Rabbi, Hartford, Conn.

to eliminate much of our traditional liturgy."

Is the reviewer attempting to be facetious when he states that "the 123 pages which it (Friday Evening Service) requires must appear very discouraging to the worshipers who expect to make the 9 o'clock movie?" Does he not perceive the obvious intention that a selection be made from all this new material? Rabbi Samuel Ruderman who uses the book, commenting on this point, wrote:

"I have found this to be one of the greatest features in its favor. Turning to different parts of the prayer book for a reading here and a hymn there, creates a wholesome feeling of suspense and anticipation on the part of the congregation, which is wholly lacking in the unvaried sameness of the traditional prayer book in which even the most casual worshipper knows exactly what is coming next. With a little effort, a varied service can be worked out from week to week which avoids repetition of the same prayers, yet retains certain constant elements."

Rabbi Routtenberg objects to the "inclusion of English transliteration of a number of Hebrew selections," and regards it "as a tacit admission of defeat." Rabbi William Greenfield, in the February 11th issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, has adequately dealt with this objection of "defeatism."

Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, who likewise uses the Sabbath and Festival Prayerbook in his Congregation, has written me:

"The varied responses, readings, and the *transliterations* make a distinct contribution to the services. People for whom the service heretofore meant little or nothing, have come to me with grateful expressions."

The implication that this prayer book is not "modern" is, of course, debatable. It seems to me that a prayer book which offers responsive readings on such pertinent themes as Peace, Justice, Labor, Goodwill, Palestine, Patriotic Occasions, the Anniversary of the Congregation, the Home, Youth, etc., does not merit criticism on the score that it is not "modern."

There is likewise a difference in opinion as to the value of the Sabbath and Festival Prayerbook in the vitalization of the Synagogue Services. That the new prayer book does not "create an air of artificiality which freezes any warmth or emotion which might be engendered" is attested to by the observation of Rabbi Milton Steinberg:

"The reaction of our Congregation to the prayer book is most enthusiastic. What made the comments of my people all the more interesting was this. The first woman who approached me was of Orthodox antecedents. I expected enthusiasm from people like her. But what delighted me especially was that immediately thereafter, I was approached by a group who stand the furthest to the left so far as tradition is concerned. They were equally enthusiastic."

Rabbi Jacob Kohn, one of the foremost thinkers in our ranks, who has had many years of experience with various prayer books, evidently considers that the new prayer book will add inspiration to the services, for he writes:

"It is my conviction that you have done a praiseworthy piece of work in producing this very convenient and inspiring book . . . It will fill a great need."

With the views of Mr. I. David Satlow, whose letter appeared in the January 26th issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, I heartily concur. He contends that the prayer book should not be the work of any one rabbi, and therefore proposes the appointment of a commission to prepare a preliminary questionnaire to be sent to the rabbis for the purpose of establishing "certain criteria, desiderata which are and should be, at the basis of so important a project."

This is precisely the procedure that I adopted as chairman of the Committee on Ritual for the Rabbinical Assembly of America. The survey, based on the detailed replies of 110 rabbis throughout the country was published in the Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings for 1930-1932, pp. 322-340. In preparation for this data, I collected the various pamphlets of responsive readings and prayers used in a number of Congregations. In the published report, I recommended that a committee be empowered by the Rabbinical Assembly to carry out the request of eighty rabbis to edit and publish a Supplementary Prayerbook. Although the

survey was enthusiastically received and approved, nothing further developed from this recommendation. When my own Congregation, a few years later, required new prayerbooks, I undertook to compile such a prayer book based on a number of weekly responsive readings already used in my Congregation, and embodying the suggestions of many of my colleagues.

After the manuscript was completed and read by several rabbis, it was the concensus of opinion that it should include also the traditional Hebrew prayers with translation in order to obviate the inconvenience and expense of using two books at a service. The Sabbath and Festival Prayerbook was the result. The *raison d'etre* for this new prayer book was not the few emendations in the Hebrew text, nor even the translations, but the provision for a variety of meditations, hymns and responsive readings culled from Biblical and Rabbinical sources which would render the liturgy more meaningful, integrate with Jewish worship such occasions as Thanksgiving Day, Armistice Day, Washington's Birthday, and which would express modern aspirations for Zionism, social justice, human dignity and personality.

This prayer book is not the last, but the first word. Most of the fifteen rabbis who have already introduced the prayer book have consented to observe the reactions of their Congregations, and to submit detailed suggestions and criticisms based on their own experience, which might be incorporated in subsequent editions. The *piyyutim* of Prof. Mordecai Kaplan will be included in the next revised edition. I feel that this method of approach, namely, experimentation, gradual changes in the Hebrew text accepted by the people themselves, and the experience and requirements of Congregations and rabbis using this book will develop in the course of time the prayer book toward which we are all aiming.

The fact that this prayer book is being adopted not only by members of the Rabbincal Assembly but by members of other groups as well, and that a number of these rabbis have consented to serve on a committee for future revisions which will be based on actual experience and not upon snap judgment, should encourage us to feel that there is evolving a prayer book which meets present day needs.

CORRESPONDENCE

OPPOSING ANTI-COMMUNIST CRUSADE

Sirs:

Your editorial entitled "How Not to Defend Democracy" appears to give an unfortunate interpretation of the recommendation I made in my article "Jewry and Democracy." Your statement "However, we question very much whether joining in an anti-Communist crusade will further the cause of democracy," seems to infer that I had suggested a red-baiting crusade.

A careful reading of my article will reveal that I did not advocate such a step. What I did advocate was an anti-Communist attitude on the part of Jews. This is vastly different from a red-baiting crusade. Red-baiting is all the evil you say it is. However, the distortions of the red-baiters should not blind us to any pitfalls involved in flirting with Communism because of the latter's opposition to Fascism. What I said was that Jews should have nothing to do with Communism in any form and not encourage it by participation in united front movements. Such an attitude need not involve red-baiting or distortion.

The last thing I had in mind was that Jews should join with those who are using the cry of Communism to trample on the rights of free speech, press and assembly. I think my article made this perfectly clear. I quite agree with your statement that it would be a betrayal of the cause of democracy to join in an anti-Communist crusade of this sort.

LOUIS MINSKY

New York, N. Y.